

AGITATION—THE DOOM OF SLAVERY.

The law of human progress advances on the wave of Agitation. The "ship of state" lazily rolls from side to side in a calm, but proudly ploughs the waters when she flings her canvass to a *breeze*. Rough storms and pelting gales may sometimes tear her rigging, but a "dead calm" delays her in the port till her timbers have rotted. The past history of the world is a vindication of this truth.

Agitation is a law of the universe. Its opposite—stagnation, is an unnatural, abnormal state. In the material world, the continual circulation of the elements, air and electricity; in the social state, the perpetual efforts at change and improvement; in the moral world, the incessant conflict of truth and error; furnish examples of the Agitation to which we refer.

Reform, in its incipient and progressive stages, is Agitation, and Reformers are Agitators. The Southern Reformation, the Abolition of British Corn Laws and Slavery, the Temperance Reformation in Ireland and elsewhere, the English Cheap Postage Movement, the Independence of the United States, the Missionary Triumph in the Sandwich Islands, were Agitations; and Luther, Calvin, Wickliffe, Cobden, Sharpe, Wilberforce, Rowland Hill, Father Matthew, Washington, Bingham, Thurston, were Agitators.

In this regard Christ was the greatest Agitator the world has ever known, directing his efforts as he did

against the long-cherished customs, habits, opinions, institutions, and religion of the world, his career was calculated to shake the very foundations of the social compact. As he went from place to place proclaiming views, at war with the most venerable institutions of the age, he was seized as a disturber of the public peace, and the excited multitude hurled their invectives upon his defenceless head. He was charged with moving the people to sedition and rebellion against their rulers. He was stigmatized as an enemy to "law and order." In short, he was arrested, condemned and crucified as an Agitator, too dangerous to be abroad. That his doctrines and measures were the occasion of social and political tumult, unparalleled in the history of mankind, is too apparent to be denied. If the essential truths of reform which he proclaimed were now allowed to permeate the social structure universally, who can conceive of the overturnings that would occur in the compass of a single year? As if swept away by the besom of destruction, the gigantic evils of the world, intemperance, fraud, licentiousness, and slavery would be removed, and a new order of institutions, of celestial character, rise to gladden the eyes and expectant hearts of Christendom.

Agitation is a PHYSICAL LAW. If stagnation were to become the permanent state of nature from this hour, such a scene would transpire as could find a parallel only in the stifled hold of a slaver. To purify the vast bodies of water that cover three-fourths of the earth's surface, the tides must flow and ebb, and the tempestuous gales roll billows mountains-high. To save the earth from disaster, by internal heat, from the mouth of many Heclas must vomit fire and smoke, amid a tumult more terrific than the voice of a thousand booming thunders. To purify the air for healthful respiration, not only the gentle

breeze and driving tempest must alternate, but there must be a play of ocean currents perpetually sweeping around the globe. Thus winds must blow, storms must gather, volcanoes roar, and electric fires be kindled, to preserve the world a suitable habitation for mankind. And Agitation in the human system is also needful for its healthful development. The pulsations of an active heart must pour the blood through every vein and artery, or life will stagnate and hasten untimely death.

Agitation is a SOCIAL LAW. Society improves in proportion to the diffusion of knowledge and truth, and neither of these is disseminated without more or less commotion. Mind, stimulated by coming in contact with mind, works out the different problems of social improvement. Where there is no intellectual agitation, no earnest persevering struggle after knowledge, there is no rising in the scale of civilization. The mind seeks repose, and can be moved to the execution of noble purposes, only by the stimulus of outward forces, or the enthusiasm of strong internal excitement. Abundant proof of this position is found in the history of Social Progress. It is gathered also from the present condition of countries beyond the Atlantic shore, as well as from the state of the oppressed in our own land. Where nothing has existed to arouse the mind from its torpor, and urge it to "deeds of noble daring" by the inspiration of unconquerable desire, there tyranny is dominant, and humanity grovels in stupid imbecility. There is no country in Europe where the people present a more painful spectacle of social degradation than in Austria. So dull and stupid are the inhabitants, that, with few exceptions, they do not complain of the cruel government under which they live. Another has said, "All that an Austrian desires, is the permission to live to-day as he did yesterday." They have little desire to rise, and

scarcely dream that there is a social state better than their own. They make little effort for change or improvement. Nor is it difficult at all to account for the fact. The cause is found in the nature of the crushing despotism that rules the land. It is the policy of the ruling monarch to suppress the *agitation* of every subject which promotes the law of human progress, be it the diffusion of knowledge, charity, or the spirit of civil and religious liberty. If one of the oppressed subjects of the empire catches an idea of social progress from a view of advancing nations, and allows it an expression in language or deeds of discontent, he is seized at once as a dangerous citizen, and consigned to dungeons where many a victim of despotic cruelty has expired. Hundreds of the choicest spirits which ever breathed under an Austrian sky are now buried in those gloomy cells for the unpardonable offense of daring *to think*. Thus, the policy to prevent the Agitation of every subject relating to human advancement has stagnated the Austrian mind, until the people present a spectacle of social degradation akin to that of the African or Hindoo.

We learn the same truth from the present condition of the negroes, in the bonds of our Southern Slavery. They are well nigh as dull and stupid as the brutes like which they are treated. So degraded is their social state, that the friends of slavery cry out against the efforts at "Abolition," "*the slaves cannot provide for themselves.*" Nor is it strange, when we reflect that they are the subjects of a despotism as merciless as that of Austria, withholding nutriment from the mind, and maiming and crippling its powers by the cruelties of a systematized oppression. The *Agitation* of every subject suited to elevate them, socially and morally, is speedily suppressed, lest they should imbibe a taste for the sweets of liberty.

If one is so unfortunate as to possess talents beyond the ordinary measure, he is surrounded with additional restraints and treated with additional severity, lest he conclude to seek a happier home toward the "Star in the North." No wonder the slave is so socially wretched, when his reward for efforts at progress is the *whip*, and his only inheritance, *the land for his grave!* Let any other class of the human family be forbidden to agitate the themes of social reform, and they will become equally stupid and imbecile.

Consider the mode we adopt to advance any cherished enterprise. Systems of education are revolutionized in our Republic by *agitating* the subject in every practicable way. Intelligence relating to the change is widely scattered in printed documents, and the people are aroused by the public harangue to engage in the work with an earnest soul. The Temperance cause is promoted, and scenes of social misery removed, through *agitation* in every village and city by the press and orator. Experience has long since taught us, that the moment we cease to "stir up" the popular mind to consider the claims of this good reform, that moment the cause begins a retrograde movement. And in carrying political measures, the very politicians, who protest against agitation in destroying the institution of Slavery, do precisely the same thing to excite and rally the people to its support. They scatter publications of the most exciting character; they send abroad lecturers to arouse the masses by noisy harangues; and they create enthusiasm by every possible expedient, such as processions, parades, military displays, bonfires and illuminations; all planned and prosecuted with the single aim, to *agitate* the people, and carry a darling measure as it were by storm. The policy, with proper limitations, is based upon a Social Law.

Agitation is a MORAL LAW. Truth advances by beating down the battlements of error. Its signal triumphs are made when it combats error face to face. The Scriptures present "truth progressive" only as the result of Agitation. The parable of "The Leaven" teaches the marvelous diffusion of the gospel, spreading from land to land until "*the whole is leavened.*" As leaven produces fermentation by coming in contact with particle after particle of the mass to be renovated, so the purifying process of the gospel necessarily advances by more or less commotion in the world to be redeemed. The principle idea of the parable may be stated thus; AGITATION—THE SECRET OF MORAL PROGRESS. In like manner the waters of Bethesda are represented as being destitute of healing power, until *troubled* by the descending angel. The plain truth taught us by the incident, is, AGITATION NECESSARY TO MORAL PROGRESS. The metaphorical descriptions of the Christian course which we read in the New Testament, representing the faithful saint as a WRESTLER, RACER, and WARRIOR, embrace in substance the same idea. These figures of speech teach *earnestness, enthusiasm, agitation*. Also, the Scriptures describe the believer ascending through "much tribulation" to his heavenly inheritance, there to swell his grateful hallelujahs for deliverance from the tumult and *agitation* of earthly conflicts.

The progress of Christianity, as it "stands revealed to our admiring eyes" at the present day, verifies the above teachings of the Bible. No marked moral achievement was ever made without great commotion, exciting incidents and hard conflicts. From the time our Saviour preached amid the intense excitement of Judea to the present age, truth has forced its way through ranks of bold opposers, and set up the walls of Zion upon the ruins of wasted governments and fallen thrones. What

tumult and overturnings were incident to the development and vindication of Luther's cherished doctrine—Justification by Faith! What long years of discussion, strife and commotion followed! How Europe trembled and shook with the mighty contest! From the King in his palace to the peasant in his cot, what forebodings and *agitation*! Even now the world has not ceased to feel the shocks of that moral revolution.

In general, the gospel still advances by such stirring agencies as the press and pulpit; discussion and controversy, continually appealing to the popular mind, with the most exciting and momentous topics that can claim attention. The missionary of the cross lands on some benighted shore. He scatters the printed page, gathers schools, preaches Christ, in opposition to all the customs, habits, and institutions of a superstitious people. Excitement sweeps in fearful gusts over the country, persecution arrays its horrid enginery, and life is periled. Shall he cease to *agitate*? Not he; for all this was foretold by the ancient seer, as incidental to the Law of Moral Progress. So he labors on, not knowing whether he shall toil peacefully, or be arrested by persecution, and sent to heaven, as was the immortal Huss, in a chariot of fire.

The student of Providence contemplates the present commotion of the European States; such a scene of strife, tumult, disorder, and dreadful persecution as the world has seldom witnessed; and thinks he perceives the evidence of the "Creator's footsteps," descending to *agitate* the waters, as the precursor of a spiritual and universal regeneration. He has seen the portentous cloud gather in the sky of summer, and from its heaving bosom rush a storm of hail and fire, while trees and ample crops fall before its blasts, sweeping over hills and valley, as if commissioned to destroy every living thing; and yet the

clouds parted their dark folds, the sun burst forth in increasing splendor, the sultry air was purified, and the bright bow of promise gilded the brow of the receding storm. So he anticipates that the political tempest now sweeping over the countries of Europe, will eventually break away, and the Sun of Righteousness beam forth amid the charms of a clear moral atmosphere and serener sky. The view which he entertains of Divine Providence, in respect to the present convulsed state of the world, is but another expression of the truth—the Law of Human Progress advances by Agitation.

Such is the proof that Agitation is a law of the universe. Of course, it is supposed that Agitation has its proper limits. While it is *legitimate*, it is also *restricted*, though at some seasons more violent than others. It is not always the rushing whirlwind, nor the “full stiff breeze,” nor yet always the gentle gale. It is sometimes one, and sometimes another of these forces. Each fills its appropriate sphere, and altogether occupy an important place in the plan of Infinite wisdom. Neither can be dispensed with, and the office of each is to *agitate*.

The extremes on either side of this question are seen in the course of the ultra Conservative and the ultra Reformer. The latter, as Carlyle said of Voltaire, carries “a torch for burning, but no hammer for building.” The former carries neither torch or hammer, satisfied that there is nothing better than what is already possessed, and maintaining such a profound reverence for the past, that, as Jerrold says, “he will not look at the new moon out of respect to that ancient institution, the old one.” The *Agitation* which we advocate is found in a “golden mean” between the two. It bears torch and hammer both. It overthrows, to lay deeper and broader foundations. It *de-stroys*, to *con-struct*. It tears down, to build up. It

agitates, to quiet. It shatters, to solidify. "It is a conservative of all that is good—a reformer of all that is evil; a conservative of knowledge, a reformer of ignorance; a conservative of truths and principles, whose seat is the bosom of God—a reformer of laws and institutions which are but the wicked, or imperfect work of man; a conservative of that divine order which is formed only in movement—a reformer of those earthly wrongs and abuses, which spring from the great Law of Human Progress. It is a Reforming Conservative, and a Conservative Reformer.*

Such is the Agitation which alone will doom the system of American Slavery. And the following facts, illustrating the policy of past ages, will serve to establish the principles already discussed. Note the method pursued a few years since to overthrow the British Corn Laws. "The anti-corn league was formed, who carried the agitation into every city, village and hamlet, and pressed the question of cheap bread and free trade in grain upon the consideration of all classes. They established a paper, they published innumerable tracts and essays, they appealed to the ballot-box, they secured the aid of ministers of different denominations, they procured thousands of memorials, and filled the land with excitement. Seven years passed, and to the amazement of the landholders, the corn laws were repealed by the very men whom they had elected to defend them.†" So with British Slavery, as the following, from the able pen of Sir George Stephen abundantly proves. "For many, many years, we found Parliament against us; then we said, 'we will appeal to the people.' We found the press against us; 'we will lecture in every public hall in the country.' And at last, it was the most difficult of all, we found the people

* Hon. Charles Sumner.

† Patton.

not actually against us, but apathetic, lethargic, incredulous, indifferent. It was then, and not till then, that we sounded the right note, and touched a chord that never ceased to vibrate. ‘To uphold slavery was a crime before God!’ It was a novel doctrine, but it was a cry that was heard, for it would be heard. The national conscience was awakened to inquiry, and inquiry soon produced conviction. * * * It was the work of half a century. First, the Slave Trade was to be regulated and conducted with humanity. Sir Wm. Dolben began the enterprise. Then followed nearly twenty years before Mr. Wilberforce succeeded in abolishing the trade ; but he did succeed. Then followed a term of four years before Lord Brougham could make the traffic felonious. Fifteen more of labor and anxiety were exhausted in attempts to ‘ameliorate’ slavery, as if slavery could be diluted into freedom. * * * Finally, four years of anxious and determined effort, of which Buxton was the leader, were crowned with triumph, and emancipation was accomplished, not simply as an act of humanity and justice, but as a duty to God.”*

The policy through all these eventful years was, Agitate! Agitate! Agitate! And this must be the rallying watchword of our land, until slavery is extinct. Presses must teem with information, pulpits must join the cry of humanity, lecturers must rouse the lethargic multitude, memorials must multiply, and controversy, persevering and warm, must sustain Right and crush the Wrong.

Were the counsels of some of the professed friends of our noble Constitution to be heeded, and the issues of the Anti-slavery Press stop, the preacher no longer plead the cause of the slave, controversy yield the day to compromise, and the people cease to memorialize their legislators,

* Independent of Feb. 3, 1853.

when should we celebrate the doom of slavery? On what principle could we anticipate the overthrow of this gigantic evil? Nay: the *death* of Agitation is the life of slavery. The day in which the ban of silence is put upon the nation, in regard to this monstrous evil, will witness unparalleled joy and exultation among the task-masters of our modern Egypt. Slavery will forge new chains, and grind her bleeding subjects with greater rigor in the dust. Injustice will take new courage, and humanity will hang her head and weep.

If Agitation is a law of nature, as has been maintained, then all efforts to suppress it are futile as attempts to frustrate the law of gravitation. Especially is this true in regard to the system of American Slavery, because it is so repugnant to humanity and truth. Aside from the view presented, there are several reasons for the opinion that Agitation upon this subject cannot be suppressed by any conceivable expedient. First, slavery in some of its ramifications, is incorporated into every important question discussed in our national council-halls. Scarcely any subject is under deliberation there, which does not provoke remarks upon Southern thralldom, *pro* or *con*. It seems well nigh impossible to separate the system, in some of its relations, from the discussion of social and political questions. In such a state of things, it is vain to expect that Agitation will cease to move the popular mind. Second, while slavery is interwoven with the interests of the nation, the leaven of Christianity is working rapidly from centre to circumference, and will continue to *ferment* until "*the whole is leavened.*" Agitation is the natural consequence of a working Christianity, in the midst of a system of wrong and injustice. Third, truth and error can co-exist no sooner than light and darkness. Slavery is almost universally acknowledged to

be a mighty wrong, existing without the sanction of revealed truth. Hence, with truth so widely diffused, and still diffusing in this Christian land, it must be brought into frequent, if not perpetual contact, with this giant curse, and the conflict cannot cease until slavery succumbs. And last, though not least, it is impossible that any evil can rest unassailed, when the *cry of humanity* is against it. And where, it may be asked with emphasis, is there a social or natural evil against which human nature protests more loudly than it does against the slave trade? Whether in free or oppressed countries, the heart of man utters but one language, and that is the language of condemnation. Ferdinand, of Austria, causes large engravings, representing a republican slaveholder flogging a slave, to be exhibited in the shop windows at Vienna, and the startled Austrians beholding it, are clamorous against Republican institutions. Though really slaves themselves, and content to continue so, their natures protest aloud against human thralldom, as it exists with us. The Ohio Senator, who goes heart and hand for the Fugitive Slave Law at Washington, befriends the fleeing fugitive at home, and conceals and feeds her in his own house, in the face of the law. His *politics* oppress the slave, but his *humanity* pleads for her deliverance. And is not the world-wide circulation of Uncle Tom's Cabin evidence that its just appeal awakens a response in the human heart? In a single year it has probably been read by twenty millions of people. Whether the subject of a republican or despotic government, the reader weeps over the graphic pages, and longs to see the bondman go free. Even the cold conservative, who has prayed for the death of Agitation, runs over its alluring pages, and is scarcely able to conceal his pity for the slave. The volume is the subject of discussion and remark on steamboats, in

rail-cars, at home and abroad. The young, the middle-aged, the old, the rich and poor, black and white, all read it, and all respond to its appeals. Few are willing to confess they never read it. And notwithstanding the efforts of the press, on both continents, to bring it into disrepute, it continues to circulate with wonderful success, gathering readers from every class of the human family. And why? It is no other than the voice of humanity, crying out against oppression. It is one loud, long protestation against a system of legalized injustice. In this regard we can utter the ancient maxim, *vox populi, vox Dei*. Hence, so long as the current of human nature is set against the system of slavery, it is in vain to expect the subject will not be intensely *agitated*. All efforts of a political character to suppress it will prove abortive. For humanity is loyal to its maker, and it will never, never cease to oppose the evils which it abhors.

Furthermore, when we consider the measures which have been adopted within the last few years, beginning with that atrocious Act—the Fugitive Slave Law—measures originating in party spirit, and prosecuted by political chicanery, in order to secure Northern sacrifices to the Southern Moloch, the impossibility of allaying the *Agitation* already created, is still more apparent. All such expedients serve only to insult the feelings of humanity, and call forth its decided protest, longer and louder, against accumulated wrongs, which, joined with the voices of the press and pulpit, provoked to plainer dealing with the traffic in human flesh, will hasten the day when this institution of stupendous wrong will be shattered down by the waves of *Agitation*, roaring and dashing against its towering battlements.

Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, thought to put a period to the *Agitation* that “stirred” his country, when

he proposed to deliver the Saviour from the cross, by adding wrong to wrong. He believed that Christ was as innocent as a "lamb led to the slaughter," yet, to allay the excitement, he proposed a "compromise," to scourge *Christ and let him go*. And when worse came to worse, and the commotion diminished not a whit, but rather increased, and he heard the threatening cry, "*If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend*," he trembled for his honor and office, and added crucifixion to the scourging, professedly to stop Agitation, and "save the Union," though it was so easy to discern through the guise of official badges, a deliberate policy to secure the loaves and fishes of political renown. But the curse of God rested upon him, and he fell at last for an act of *cruelty*! How much better for him had he dared to stand by his own convictions, and released Christ, even at the expense of his own life, since *then* he would have died for an act of tenderness! There is a plain lesson in this incident for the present age, in which the game of Pilate is played on a large scale. It is far better that the Union be dissolved by the Agitation of humanity, than by the perpetration of such injustice as will surely hasten its dissolution—the wrongs incident to the support of oppression.

The Slave Power is ascendant. The country is terribly oppressed, but elements of renovation are working as leaven in its midst, and, with the power of legitimate, moral Agitation, will work itself clear.

(*Opinion of MRS. STOWE on excluding Slave-holders from the Church.*)

“ Consider the picture which the Kentucky Synod had drawn of the actual state of things among them :—“ The members of slave-families separated, never to meet again until the final judgment ; brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, daily torn asunder, and permitted to see each other no more : the shrieks and agonies, proclaiming as with trumpet-tongue the iniquity and cruelty of the system ; the cries of the sufferers going up to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ; not a neighborhood where those heart-rending scenes are not displayed ; not a village or road without the sad procession of manacled outcasts, whose chains and mournful countenances tell they are exiled by force from all that heart holds dear ; Christian professors rending the mother from her child, to sell her into returnless exile.”

This was the language of the Kentucky Synod fourteen years before ; and those scenes had been going on ever since, and are going on now, as the advertisements of every Southern paper show : and yet the Church of Christ since 1818 had done nothing but express regret, and hold grave metaphysical discussions as to whether slavery was an “ evil *per se*,” and censure the rash action of men who, in utter despair of stopping the evil any other way, tried to stop it by excluding slave-holders from the church. As if it were not better that one slaveholder in a hundred should stay out of the church, if he be peculiarly circumstanced, than that all this horrible

agony and iniquity should continually receive the sanction of the church's example! Should not a generous Christian man say, "If Church excision will stop this terrible evil, let it come, though it does bear hardly upon me! Better that I suffer a little injustice than that this horrible injustice be still credited to the account of Christ's church. Shall I embarrass the whole church with my embarrassments? What if I am careful and humane in my treatment of my slaves,—what if, in my heart, I have repudiated the wicked doctrine that they are my property, and am treating them as my brethren,—what am I then doing? All the credit of my example goes to give force to the system. The church ought to reprove this fearful injustice, and reprovers ought to have clean hands; and if I cannot really get clear of this, I had better keep out of the church till I can."—*Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, p. 213.

Let Mammon hold, while Mammon can,
 The bones and blood of living man;
 Let despots scorn, while despots dare,
 The shrieks and writhings of despair;—

The *end will come*, it will not wait,
 Bonds, yokes, and scourges have their date;
 Slavery itself must pass away,
 And be a tale of yesterday.